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Worshiping God With Our Substance.

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TWO SERMONS,

BY

REV. A. M. FRASER,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church
of Staunton, Va.

SUBJECT:

Worshiping God With Our Substance.

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INTRODUCTION.

To raise sufficient revenues to prosecute the work of the churches in their several departments has been a difficult task for most congregations. Depending on the voluntary contributions of the church members, the revenues depend on the ability and the willingness of the latter to contribute. Few churches but have the ability to sustain themselves and contribute to outside causes, if the membership of the church has been educated in liberal giving. On the ministry, therefore, largely devolves the task of supplying this education.

It is thought that few ministers have more clearly expounded the Bible doctrine of giving than has Rev. A. M. Fraser, of the First Presbyterian church, of Staunton, Virginia. The series of two sermons, here published as one discourse, on the subject, "Worshiping God with Our Substance," which he delivered to his charge in the month of February, 1894, made a powerful and lasting impression on that congregation, fruitful of great good and of material blessing to that church. To preserve the sermons in enduring form for the edification of their own church and of all Christians who may be moved to read them, the Board of Deacons have decided to publish them in phamphlet form, and in the succeeding pages present them, confident that, with the Lord's blessing, they will touch many a Christian heart.

FIRST SERMON.

TEXT:—"*Prov. III: 9, Honor the Lord With Thy Substance.*"

The subject presented to us by this text is that of worshiping or "honoring" the Lord with our "substance" or property. In advance of everything else I have to say on the subject, I wish to make this statement: I shall not lay down a single main proposition but such as I feel sure of securing your unqualified concurrence in, and if you act in accordance with the convictions thus reached, such a thing as a financial problem will disappear from our church operations, and we will be doing more in proportion to our means than any church of which I have any knowledge.

Now if I have succeeded, during my residence in your midst, in winning, to any extent, your confidence in my judgment, this statement at the outset of such a discussion ought to secure the closest and most serious attention to all I have to say. Let me repeat and emphasize the statement: I shall not lay down a single leading proposition but such as I feel confident of securing your unqualified assent to. I may be mistaken, but I doubt if a lawyer ever stood before a jury more confident of his case than I am of carrying my case in the minds of this jury of six hundred persons. And that is a great deal to say when money is the subject to be discussed. And, moreover, if all will act in accordance with the views thus formed, financial difficulties will disappear from our church and we will be doing more in proportion to our ability than any church of my acquaintance. With this preface I proceed to announce my first proposition.

I. *In order that the Church may do the work which the Lord has given it to do,* IT MUST HAVE MONEY.

It is unscriptural and impossible for the church to do the work the Master has given it to do, without the use of money. It might seem unnecessary to insist upon a proposition so nearly self-evident as this one is, but there are some who dispute it, and it is possible that the leaven of this error is working to a greater extent than we suspect. They say that the gospel is free and then deceive themselves with the sophistry that because the gospel is free, no money should be employed in its operations. Salvation is offered to all who will accept it, "without money and without price," and if any man thinks when he pays money into the Lord's treasury that he is paying for his redemption, he has never begun to know the value of that redemption, and greatly over-rates the value of money. When Simon, the sorcerer, offered to give the apostles money for the gift of the Holy Ghost, Peter rebuked him indignantly saying, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Possibly it was to this occasion that Peter's mind reverted when he afterwards wrote in his first epistle, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold." But because God has chosen to make eternal life a free gift, he has not, therefore, denied us the privilege of worshiping him with our substance and using our money to serve him.

That money is needed to do this work, the following considerations will show:

1. It is right, and God has ordained that there shall be a ministerial office in the church. There should be at least one man for each Christian community who shall devote his whole time to the study and ministry of the word and to prayer. God has commanded him to give himself "wholly" to these things. Of course it is necessary for that man to get a living. But whence shall that living come? If he stops to make his own living, he will not be giving himself "wholly" to these things. In proportion as his spiritual ministrations are interrupted by worldly cares and avocations will his knowledge of the Word be imperfect and his ministry enfeebled. My standard of ministerial scholarship and efficiency are very far above the plain on which I labor, but if I were forced to work for a living from Monday morning till Saturday night and then preach on Sunday

such things as I had gathered through the week, I would sink to a level very far below the one I now occupy. If, then, a minister may not stop to earn his own living, whence can that living come except it be from the offerings of God's people which they make for the maintenance of the worship of God? God has made no other provision.

2. Not only has God not made any other provision than that, he has in fact made exactly that provision. [Perhaps I should pause here for an explanation. I hope that no one imagines for a moment that these remarks have any reference that is personal to myself. No congregation could discharge its obligations to its pastor more completely and punctually than you have met all your financial obligations to me. If it were otherwise I would not feel at liberty to discuss the subject as freely as I do. As I explained in a former sermon, I am preaching upon this class of subjects in response to a request to do so, and because we are now contemplating a change in our method of raising the revenues of the church. I wish, therefore, to discuss the subject in a manner that shall be free from all personal references and upon the high ground of Bible teaching and Christian duty and privilege. With this explanation I will proceed with the proof that God has ordained that the ministry shall be supported out of the offerings of his worshipers.]

At 1 Timothy v:17 we find these words: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." What is this "honor" that is to be accorded all elders and a double portion of which is due to those "elders who rule well" or "who labor in the word and doctrine?" A close study of the word in its historical uses in Israel and in its connection with the passage here, will lead you to the conclusion that by "honor" Paul meant a material support of some kind. This is made clear by the following verse. When we discuss religious subjects we are in the habit of quoting from the Bible to support our positions, and so Paul did in this case. Passing to the next verse (the 18th) we find him quoting from Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn."

The old way of thrashing wheat (for that is what is meant by "corn") was to drive oxen to and fro across it and let them tread the grain out of the straw. When they became tired and hungry, they would reach down and get a mouthful of straw,

sometimes getting grain along with the straw. A stingy man would be inclined to stop this little waste by muzzling the oxen or tying baskets over their mouths. The law of Moses forbade their treating the oxen so. It was upon the principle of justice that the oxen were earning all they got. They were yielding incomparably greater quantities of grain than they were getting. Now why does Paul quote that particular scripture in this connection? What bearing has it on the subject in hand, the giving of "honor" to elders? The logic of the quotation is that "elders who rule well, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine," are treading out the bread of life for the people, and whilst they are so engaged they are not to be debarred from getting a living by that work. He follows up this quotation with another, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." The minister is a laborer, and if you get any good at all out of his labors, it is worth far more to you than the support you give him. Paul says elsewhere on the same subject, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things? In further proof of the same position we might turn to the ninth chapter of First Corinthians, where a great deal of the chapter is taken up with the direct discussion of this subject and it is all so forcible that it is hard to select one verse or a few verses for illustration. There we find the apostle using the same quotation he did in 1 Timothy, v:18: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," and again applies it to the subject of supporting the ministry. And he adds the question, "Doth God take care for Oxen? or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." That is, God's object in putting that precept into the law of Moses and keeping it there through all these centuries was to impress upon the people this simple principle of justice in order that it might be applied to the support of the Christian ministry in these latter times, "That he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." In this same ninth chapter also occurs this language: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Do not such passages satisfy us that the church must have money to keep itself supplied with the Gospel?

3. But the church needs money not only to supply itself with the ministration of the Gospel, but also to send that Gospel to those who do not have it. The command of Christ is to "preach the Gospel to every creature." And Paul asks in reference to the heathen, "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" And it is in the line of these questions to add, "How shall they be sent without money?" Whether they go by railway and steamship or afoot, money is necessary to support them. But it is useless to dwell longer on this proposition. Enough has been said to show that both Scripture and sound reasoning place it beyond every vestige of doubt.

II. The next proposition is this:

In order that the church may do the work which the Lord has given it to do, it must have A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY.

If you were to travel from this point in a westerly direction for a hundred miles you would doubtless encounter communities that are thickly settled with an ignorant, thriftless, godless population that needs the Gospel. There will, of course, be some ready to say that it is useless to preach the Gospel to such people, but they say so in ignorance of what the Gospel is now doing in many such communities and forgetful of the fact that their own ancestors were rescued from a far worse condition by this same Gospel. I once heard a lawyer say to a jury, "If I thought my client was guilty of the crime of which he is accused, I would not reach out my hand to save him from torment." Everybody knew that the client was guilty and that the lawyer knew he was and had consented to defend him only on condition of a fee of five hundred dollars. He was not only reaching out his hand to save him, but putting forth all his might. No, there never lived a man so infamously wicked and cruel, but what we would do all in our power to save him if we believed he was going to torment. Now when a minister goes to such a community as I have mentioned and preaches the Gospel there, that Gospel proves just as sweet and saving there as it does among us. They accept it, and they are gathered into a church. They must have a house to worship in and a preacher to instruct them. They cannot supply these for themselves. It takes time for the Gospel to

work such a change in their lives that they can become industrious, economical, yet liberal and self-supporting. Meanwhile, according to the Bible rule that we ought to bear one another's burdens and the strong should help the weak, it is our duty to assist them. Now there are many such churches throughout the country and they create a demand for a great deal of money. Again, more than one-fifth of all the churches on our roll are marked "vacant" in the minutes of the assembly. A great many of those not marked "vacant" have preaching but rarely. Many have preaching only every other Sabbath; many have it but one Sabbath out of three or four, and some of them but once in two months. Many ministers whose whole time is occupied with one church or a group of churches are insufficiently supported. They are driven to penurious economy, wearing coarse and often threadbare clothes themselves, subjecting their families to privations, in order to eke out a scanty living on from four to seven hundred dollars a year—less money than is often paid by large cities for fourth-rate officials to idle away their time. This is not an exaggeration. A few years ago I met a gentleman who had often visited in a congregation that was served by a minister whom I had known as a student at the Theological Seminary. I asked how this former acquaintance was succeeding in the ministry and I had this reply: "He is doing very poorly. Sometimes he preaches very good sermons and they show what he can do. But generally he preaches very poor sermons, though the people bear with the poor ones very patiently, for they understand that he has been at the plow all the week when he preaches them." I grant that that is an exceptional case, but it is not a rare exception, as I could show by other illustrations. But what must the rule be that admits of such exceptions! Money is needed to piece out the living of such men so as to allow them to give themselves fully and efficiently to the ministry.

Again, take the case of ministers disabled by age or disease, and of helpless families of deceased ministers. So many have been receiving such small salaries that they are unable to save anything against an evil day. When sickness, old age or death overtakes them they are found in absolute destitution. You may place them upon the roll of paupers if you wish, but still the duty of making some provision for them as for other paupers is an imperative one. The Masons take care of their poor and so do other fraternities. How much more should the church do

so when these have sacrificed themselves in her service? But to meet this obligation, there must be more money.

Again, we have candidates for the ministry to be aided in getting an education. A very large proportion of our candidates for the ministry come from poorer families. They have nothing to offer to the Lord except themselves. We must either cut off the supply of ministers to that extent or else provide the means for educating them.

Again, consider the work of home missions proper, or that of carrying the Gospel to parts of this country that are destitute of it. Those of you who have read Dr. Strong's book will recall the outline of his argument setting forth the problem of home missions as it lies before the church today. Think of the immense influence to be wielded in the future by the Trans-Mississippi region of the United States! Think of the portentous forces of godless immigration, Romanism, mormonism, socialism, intemperance, sudden wealth and the congregating of large bodies of wild, lawless men into cities and mining camps, all of which are fast combining in the formation of an ominous national character there! How important it is that the power of the Gospel shall be felt there while the mass is forming, to neutralize the evil and to create a religious life among the people! To do this immense work requires a great deal of money.

Once more, remember that there are yet a thousand million heathen in the world, and our Saviour has laid upon this generation the obligation to do all it can to make known the Gospel to every one of them. He said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." He did not grant the church an unlimited time in which to obey that command. He did not say, "I will give you ten thousand years," nor "I will give you six thousand years." He did not allow two thousand years. He did not say to us, "Go on and take your ease, build fine homes, buy up great farms, accumulate bank stock, surround yourselves with every luxury and occasionally when you get into a mellow mood give a little something to save some of your perishing fellowmen. But take your own time" He did not speak in that way. He did sanction some delay. He said, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." But as soon as that "power from on high" came down upon them on the day of Pentecost, the command became at once a present, pressing, imperative, terrific, explosive, "Go!"

The Duke of Wellington is said to have called this command the "Church's marching orders," but this army has waited two thousand years to obey the General's orders to "march!"

Dr. Pierson has drawn a telling contrast between the conduct of the church in this matter and the action of Mordecai when the Jews were threatened. Haman secured a decree for the extermination of the Jews. That decree could not be revoked, but Mordecai secured a counter-decree permitting the Jews to defend themselves when assailed. It was necessary to make known this decree to all the Jews living in all the kingdom. There were one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, extending from Hindostan on the east to Ethiopia on the west, and each province had its own language or dialect. Mordecai undertook the work of placing this decree in the possession of every Jew in all these provinces and in his own dialect. He had no facilities for the work, such as printing presses, mail, telegraph, railroad or steamship, and yet in less than nine months he had finished the work.

He also tells a story to illustrate the same point: A minister once asked an English soldier if Queen Victoria were to issue a decree and command the British army to place it in the hands of every creature, how long it would take to accomplish it His reply was: "I think we could manage it in about eighteen months." But the church, with equal resources and with infinitely more tremendous motives, has dragged along for nearly 2,000 years and has scarcely made a beginning of doing the work yet. Now that Great Commission rests upon the conscience of the present generation with all the weight it would have had if no preceding generation had been negligent of its duty. It is just as if all intervening generations were obliterated and the church of today were standing in the immediate presence of its Lord, and receiving the whole commission, were charged with its prompt accomplishment.

Imagine yourself standing on the brink of a precipice and as you look landward you see a cloud of dust in the distance. As you closely watch it, you see the moving forms of human beings in the midst. As it approaches nearer, you discern that it is a moving column of humanity, marching four abreast and directly towards you. When it gets very near, you stand aside to see what it will do, expecting it to turn either to the right hand or to the left. But it does not do either. It marches on and off and is dashed to pieces on the rocks below. File after

file follow to the same dreadful death. You shriek yourself hoarse and make the wildest gestures to warn them of their danger, but it is all in vain—they are blind and deaf. You look back to see how long that column of death is, and you cannot see the end. It is interminable. Now if you know something that could save them and do not resort to it, would you not be something less than human?

This is not a fancy scene I have tried to draw, but a terribly earnest reality. That moving column is the heathen world, blind and deaf, marching with that same steady step toward the brink of ruin, and every step launches its file of four into that abyss. On and on it comes, a ceaseless stream till God through his church shall arrest it.

Now take a bird's-eye view of the work. There are weak churches to help, ministers to be supported, invalid ministers to care for, poor boys to educate for the ministry, a vast unoccupied territory in this country to be evangelized, and a thousand million heathen to whom the Lord has commanded us to take the Gospel. Do you not then assent to the second proposition that the church needs a great deal of money to do its work?

III. My next proposition is:

The Church of today has MONEY ENOUGH *to do the work if it were only consecrated to that end.*

A few simple calculations will make this evident. What is the total amount of money paid out by the people of the United States in a year as the result of revenue-legislation? It is impossible to tell exactly, but we can reach a safe working estimate. The Secretary of the Treasury of the United States has recently given out his estimate of the expenses of the government for the current year (1894), and it is about four hundred and fifty millions of dollars. The annual revenues amount to possibly a little less than that, though not much. To make a safe estimate, let us say that the revenues amount to $400,000,000. Add to this, $100,000,000 as a safe estimate of the revenues of all the states. But this is not all. I once heard an eminent statesman, who had occupied the high position of chairman of the committee of ways and means of the National House of Representatives, make this statement in a public speech: "The increase in the price of manufactured goods in this country, resulting from tariff laws, which does not go into the National Treasury but to manu-

facturers, amounts to a thousand millions of dollars a year." You understand he does not say that that is the cost of manufactured goods, but these goods cost that much more than they would if legislation were different. I take it for granted that a man occupying his high position, and at that time aspiring to a higher, would not be reckless in the statement of facts of which he had every opportunity to judge, especially in a public speech that would be reported in all the large papers in the country. But suppose that it be granted that he was not a statesman, but merely a politician, making these statements for party purposes. Suppose we say that he is very wide of the mark and so, in order to be safe, divide his figures by two. That would still leave $500,000,000, going in that direction. Now, if we add that to the other $500,000,000 we found actually paid into National and State treasuries, the grand total paid out annually by the people of this country as the result of revenue laws will certainly reach the sum of one thousand million dollars. [I take it that in these remarks I am not touching on the dangerous ground of politics. Political parties differ as to conclusions drawn from such estimates rather than upon the estimates themselves.]— That thousand millions of dollars is paid without any very perceptible strain. Six years ago we had a national political campaign in which the parties joined issue upon the single question of whether or not the laws should be changed so as to reduce these burdens. But, though the intellectual faculties of the people were fully aroused and concentrated upon this question, it was impossible to persuade them sufficiently of the grievousness of taxation to make them consent to any change in the laws. Now, what part of that large sum of money do the Christian people pay? The Christians (Protestants) are one-fifth of the whole population. It is true that many of these are women and children who do not control much money. On the other hand it is true that comparatively very few of the very poor are in the church. Letting these two facts offset each other, it will be fair to conclude that these Protestant Christians, who are one-fifth of the population, own one-fifth of the wealth. That is, they pay one-fifth of that thousand million dollars paid out as the result of financial legislation. That means that the Christian people in this country pay annually $200 000,000 for the luxury of being governed. And they do it easily. When asked practically at the ballot box, "What do you think of the

burdens of taxation?" they answer, "We do not care anything about the burdens of taxation. We do not feel them." Many of them become angry because the question is raised. Christian people pay out annually $200,000,000 and never miss it!

Let us look at the question from another point of view. Dr. Strong calculates that the increase of wealth of the Christians of this country is very nearly $500,000,000 a year. That is not their entire income, but their surplus. After they have met all their necessary expenses, and paid their taxes, and made their church contributions, and done their charities, and made their presents, and bought their luxuries and pleasures, and can find no way by which they can spend any more, they then have $500-000,000 left over, that does nothing but roll itself over like a snow ball and get bigger.

Examine the question from still another point of view. What proportion of our people are consumers of ardent spirits? In view of the fact that but a small proportion of women and children use them at all, I think it would be safe to take the estimate given by one who is regarded as an authority, and say that about one-fifth of the population are consumers of intoxicants. That means that for every Christian in the land there is one consumer of drink. Now certainly the Christian people are equally as able financially as those who use strong drink, and probably they are better off. What then are the people of this class able to give for their beverage? They pay $900,000,000 annually. They pay eagerly and greedily $900,000,000 a year for that which is taking their bodies to the grave and their souls to hell. Could not the church with the same number and the same ability pay the same sum with the same ease, if it loved its Master as they love their enemy?

Let me not speak injuriously of the church as a whole. There is no such devotion in the world as some of the followers of Christ show to Him and His cause. I know a candidate for the ministry now in college who walks the whole distance from his home across mountain roads to get to college. He takes the little sum given him by his Presbytery and friends to pay his board. After college hours he makes a little money by small jobs of work through the town. In vacation he spends his mornings teaching school and his afternoons in a railroad cut shoveling and hauling dirt. All this he is doing in order that he may have the sweet privilege of preaching the gospel.

I recall another case of one of the purest and brightest young men we had at college while I was there. He was a candidate for the ministry and he had to stop one year and teach school to get means for completing his education. While teaching school, another opportunity was offered to do remunerative work and he accepted it, though it kept him up nearly all night. At length the great strain of working so constantly with so little sleep, affected his brain. In a moment of temporary insanity he assailed a man with a horse whip and was shot to death. He was a man of such a gentle, loving spirit that he was one of the very last men we would have suspected to be capable of such violence.

There are sewing women who are wearing their fingers out to make a living, and then give a large part of what they earn to the worship of God. There are those in this town who habitually deny themselves what we regard as the necessary things of life in order that they may give to the worship of God. There are also wealthy persons who consecrate their substance after the same manner. There is no passion in the world so strong as the love for Christ is in some souls. What a revolution there would be if the whole church were aroused to the same degree of consecration.

Now what could be accomplished if the Christian people would contribute for religious uses such sums as they are manifestly able to do? I calculate that for every one thousand dollars expended in foreign mission work, there is one living missionary in the field. I do not mean that every missionary gets a salary of one thousand dollars. Very far from it! I mean that when all the money expended in various ways in mission work is added up and the whole divided by the number of missionaries, it amounts to a thousand dollars to each missionary. So that if the Christians would put as much money into the work of the church as is now paid because of revenue laws, it would put two hundred thousand missionaries into the field. If they would use the $500,000,000 of surplus earnings in the work, that would put five hundred thousand missionaries in the field. And if they would give as bountifully as men pay for intoxicants, they would place nine hundred thousand missionaries in the field —nearly a million men. If these million missionaries divide up the heathen world equally among themselves there would be one missionary to every one thousand souls. This shows what the

Christians of the United States alone could do, to say nothing of the rest of the Christian world.

This has been a century of marvellous progress in every department of human activity. All the modern work of missions has been done during this century. While that work has not more than fairly begun, yet it is opening up wonderfully. It seems to lack but one thing. It lags for want of means. But there are signs of awakening on every hand. Some ten years ago our church was giving less than fifty thousand dollars to the cause of Foreign Missions and the Assembly asked for a hundred thousand. I for one felt depressed about it, when I thought how much was needed and how little was given, and how hard it was to raise that little. But within these ten years we have increased to an amount nearly three times as great as it was then. Of course, the demands have grown as well as the supply, but I wish to call attention to the fact that there is growth in giving.

Now if the church should awake to a sense of its full ability and responsibility and send out its two or nine hundred thousand missionaries, and the other churches of Christendom do as well, prosecuting their work with equal vigor for the next six years, and so enter upon a great campaign to occupy the world for Jesus, it could put the gospel into the hands of every living creature before the year 1900, and so as we pass from this century into the next, we would pass into a new era. This may seem extravagant, but so have all great achievements seemed before they were realized. Steam is one of the greatest agents man has ever mastered, and while it is so simple we wonder every child did not discover its use, for ages it struggled in vain from every tea pot to declare itself to man. If some prophet would predict to us some of the uses to which electricity will be put within a few years, he would be laughed at, if, indeed, he were not regarded as too silly for laughter. Yet this immense agency lies idle all around us, struggling in some language we cannot yet read to tell us what it can do—services long desired, but long esteemed impossible. But there is a mightier power than either steam or electricity lying within the reach of the church, crying out for recognition and crying in vain. For two thousand years the church has been praying, "Thy kingdom come," and doubtless really wishing it to come, yet here is the simple means for bringing it to pass whenever it shall be consecrated to that end. It is a lever by which the church may be prized from its militant to its triumphant state.

IV. The next proposition is:

The Church has NOT PROPERLY CONSECRATED ITS MONEY *to the work.*

We sometimes hear a remark like this: "All that Christian people need is to have a cause properly presented to them and they will respond liberally." That means that people will contribute a few cents or dollars to any proper cause however indifferently it is presented, but that if a good appeal is made they will contribute a few more cents or dollars. And this may be liberal according to prevailing ideas, but prevailing ideas are all too low. The conduct of Christians in this matter is frequently like that of a man who has suddenly become very rich, who wants to live like a rich man, but who does not know how. He does not know the comparative value of different objects nor their relative importance. He does not know what is the proper amount of money to spend on this class of luxuries and that. Now, Christians, with all their education and culture in other matters, have never learned the true measure of the worship of God with their substance. Out of all the wealth owned by Christians in this country, and confronted with such a problem of work as they are, they give only five and a half millions to foreign missions. This may seem like a large amount, but "large" and "small" are relative terms. As compared with the little you and I may have, it is a large sum. But when we compare it with the total wealth of Christians, when we compare it with what they uncomplainingly give for the support of the government, with what the intemperate man pays for his beverage, with the needs of the work, it is very, very small. There is a cry from every part of the church, for more money. I think the managers of our beneficent enterprises are the saddest looking men in our midst. Letters come pouring in upon them all the time, telling of personal distress, domestic tragedies and spiritual destitution, wringing their hearts till they have acquired a look and tone of suffering.

About twenty years ago there was a singular phenomenon in the city of Charleston, S. C., perhaps peculiar to that city and possibly it may be witnessed there still. During an alarm of fire at night it seemed as if the whole population rushed into the streets and shouted "Fire!" That same cry coming from so many different directions and in so many different keys blended into one continuous, prolonged, unearthly wail that, like some

great live thing, seemed to wind itself around and around in the darkness above the city as long as the alarm lasted. If we could hear all the cries of distress that come from all over the church, would they not combine into such a piteous wail like the wailing of the lost? Could this be so while the church has all the wealth we have seen that it possesses, if that money was in any sense really consecrated to the Master's work?

I hope to be able to conclude the discussion when we meet again on next Sabbath.

SECOND SERMON.

TEXT:—"Honor the Lord with Thy Substance." Prov. III: 9.

On last Sabbath I began to preach on "The Worship of God with Our Substance," treating the subject in a series of propositions. I had proceeded as far as the fourth proposition. This morning I bespeak your interest while I resume the series.

V. My next proposition or set of propositions have reference to a plan for bringing the church up to a PROPER STANDARD OF CONSECRATION. *What are some of the characteristics to be sought after in devising such a plan?*

1 It should be a plan that will result in a sufficient supply of money to do the work.

I need not dwell on that. If we have the work to do and have the money to do it, we should certainly adopt some plan for applying the money to the work.

2 It should be a plan that will distribute the burdens of church support equitably among the members.

A plan is wanted that will secure from each member a sum that in proportion to his income is the equivalent of what every other member is contributing in proportion to his income. How often it happens that this state of things exists in a congregation: There is a wealthy man in the church who contributes largely to all causes, and he is a complainer. He complains because he has too much of the burden of the expense of the church to bear. He says that he has the whole church on his shoulders. Then there is in the same church a poorer man who contributes

much less than his rich neighbor, and he, too, complains. He complains that the wealthy brother is far too proud of what he does, and after all he does not believe that the wealthy man is doing as much as one of his means ought to do. We want, if possible, to devise a plan that will restore the equilibrium and remove these small jealousies and heart-burnings.

3 It should be a plan that will work with the least degree of friction possible.

One of the most perplexing questions in our churches is: "How can we secure enough money for our necessary expenses, and do it without wounding anybody's feelings and without causing any unpleasantness?" The money problem is one that causes more heart-burnings between pastors and people, more ruptures between churches and their higher courts, more envyings, jealousies and alienations between former friends in the same church than perhaps any other. It is a problem that is fairly wearing out the spirituality and efficiency of the church. Now whenever we can do something to remove this friction, we to that extent advance the prosperity of the church. When a machine is first invented the friction is sometimes so great that the machine tears itself to pieces. All the expense saved in the amount of work done is lost in the wear and tear of the machine itself. Every unit that is removed from the friction of running the machine is one or more units added to the value and efficiency of it. Just so in the work of the church. Every unit that is taken from the worry and annoyance involved in the mechanical operations of it will add a great deal to its spiritual power.

4 It should be a plan that will relieve the deacons of the unpleasant and unscriptural task of collecting.

We need a system with some spontaneity about it—one by which, when the appointed time comes, members will come of their own accord and deposit their offerings with the deacons. That will leave to those officers only the scriptural duty of receiving those offerings and disbursing them.

5. It should be a plan that will establish a community of interests between a pastor and his congregation and draw them into a fuller sympathy with each other.

The preacher ought not to be the richest man in the community (unless his property has come from a private source, and even then the effect is bad.) He ought not to live as a prince among

the people and "a lord over God's heritage," as is said to be the case in the north of Scotland, for instance. It is said that, however abject the poverty of the people may be, the preacher lives in a comfortable home. (There, however, the minister is supported by the State and not by money contributed by the worshippers.) But if the minister should not be the richest man in the community, neither should he be the poorest. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." To "communicate" means "to make a common cause with." Let the hearer make common cause with the preacher. Let him give towards his support such an amount as added to similar gifts of others will make the preacher an average man in the community. For my part, I would be glad to see the plan of a stated salary dispensed with, and another put in its place by which the minister's support might adjust itself to the ever varying ability of the people. According to the salary plan, a stated amount must be paid to the preacher every year, whether the people are making much or little. In years when business depression prevails, it may be a great strain upon a church to meet its obligations to its pastor. In successful years it is so easy to pay that it never causes the people to have a serious thought of God. Now, if possible, such an arrangement should be made that the interests of the minister, and of religion generally, would rise and fall with those of the people, and so minister and people would have an additional pledge of mutual sympathy.

6 It should be a plan that will promote the spirituality of the church.

The very working of the plan itself should have the effect of drawing the people closer to God. There should be such a fixed ratio between the amount the people make and what they offer for the worship of God, that in the act of offering it their thoughts would be turned to God as the giver of "every good gift." Thus in years of prosperity the largeness of the offering would remind them of the bounty of God to them and prompt them to gratitude, and in adversity they would be led to humiliation and self-examination.

Now, before I proceed with the other propositions, allow me to pause here to lay emphasis upon the desirability of a plan embodying these features. For while I still feel confident that you will concur in the remaining propositions, so far as the intellect and heart and conscience are concerned, observation has taught

me that there are always some whose minds and wills part company at this point. Let us then make sure of so much as we have thus far gained. It is not right and it is not wise to leave such an important matter as the support of the kingdom of Christ to mere caprice or to be determined by the amount of small change people may happen to be carrying with them when a collection is taken up on Sunday. No other business is carried on without some systematic provision and forethought, and why should this? Let me recommend some such method as this: Decide first of all that you will consecrate to God a *definite fraction* of your income. However much more you may give, resolve not to give less than that particular fraction. Whether that fraction be one-fourth of one per cent., or one-half of one per cent., one or two or five or ten or twenty per cent., whatever it be, let it be settled. If you cannot decide in any other way what that fraction should be, I would suggest this plan: Make an estimate of the amount of money your church ought to raise for all purposes, and, comparing your own prosperity with that of the other members of the church, make a just estimate of what part you should contribute to the whole. And then when you learn what fraction of your income that is, you will be in a position to decide intelligently what fraction you ought to give permanently. Now, if a methodical procedure like that is adopted, it will result in your having some money always on hand for religious uses, and whenever the proper time comes you will not need to have the deacons dun you, but you can carry your offering promptly and gladly and hand it to them. By all means let some intelligent, consecrated *method* be substituted for the lax and unsystematic habits that prevail with so many Christians. We often hear criticism of the manner in which the church conducts her different financial operations. Persons ask "Why doesn't the church have better business methods in her work?" If improvement is needed and is ever to be made, it ought to begin among the private members of the church. They ought to introduce better business methods in their handling of their money for God. The ministers who generally have charge of these financial operations, put into practice the lessons they in their youth have learned as members of our various congregations, and you cannot expect a stream to rise higher than its source. If it be true that there is any lack of the wisest thrift in the management of our home and foreign missions and other great enterprises of the church, the

best way to effect improvement is to introduce reform into the fountain heads, in the congregations. Let our boys who, as ministers and elders, will have the control of these enterprises in the future, learn to do God's work in the most discreet way by seeing good business methods all around them in the way God's people make their contributions to the maintenance of religion. Let me, then, urge this much upon your serious attention, even if we cannot go hand in hand to the end of the discussion.

VI. My sixth proposition is:

At one time in the history of the world a system of religious finances was in operation which embodied these features. It was instituted by divine command, and it is the only system that we are sure God ever appointed.

I refer, of course, to the tithe law of the Israelites. When an Israelite received the product of his labor, of whatever kind it might be, whether grain or oil or wine or lambs or whatever else, before using from it himself, he set aside a definite fraction of it for the worship of God. That fraction was one-tenth or a tithe. That tenth belonged to God. It was consecrated, it was holy. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem aught of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it." (Lev., xxvii, 30-32.) There was also set apart in Israel about one-tenth of the people (to be exact, one tribe out of twelve, the tribe of Levi) whose duty it was to do all the official acts of religion. To these Levites God gave the tithes of the rest of Israel for a means of living. They had no inheritance in the division of the land and their living came from these tithes. (Num., xviii, 24.) Here then is a system of religious revenues that God appointed at one time and it bears the stamp of God's approval as a just and wise system. It is the only system that does thus bear the clear and unquestionable approval of God. It has been maintained that God has withdrawn that system and substituted another for it, but there is at least a doubt or question as to whether He has done so or not. There is no doubt that he at one time ordained the tithe law. So that law has the distinc-

tion of being the only system of religious finances concerning which there is no doubt that God did appoint and approve it. I shall return to the question of whether or not he has supplanted that system with another.

There are some popular misconceptions of the nature of these tithes. 1. Some have understood the tithe to be a tithe of one's surplus earnings. I have had right wealthy men to tell me that they practiced the tithing plan, when I knew perfectly well that they did not do so. If they had tithed, their offerings would have amounted to several hundred dollars, whereas they did not give, at the most, more than one hundred dollars. They were not telling a known falsehood. They simply failed to understand what the tithe meant. They thought it meant a tenth of the *surplus*. They paid their family expenses, improved their homes, decorated these homes, purchased books and pictures, indulged in luxuries, took pleasure trips, gave presents, and when they had spent all they could in these ways and had a few hundred dollars left over, they gave a tenth of that to the Lord and then imagined that they were tithing as the Israelites did. But the tenth which the Israelite gave was not a tenth of his net profits or his surplus, but of his unused, undivided, gross income. He deducted the Lord's tenth before he took any part for himself. Of course it is proper to deduct the business expenses or those expenses incurred in the actual making of the income. That cannot be fairly reckoned as a part of the income itself. But while the business expenses are deducted the personal and family expenses ought not to be.

2. It has sometimes been supposed that the tithe was exacted for both religious uses and civil taxes, because there was an alliance between the church and the State in Israel. Acting upon that theory, some men claim to pay a tenth because when they add their taxes and their contributions to religious purposes they amount to a tenth of their income. Now this is a misconception also. Whatever may have been the relations between the church and the State under the old dispensation, their revenues were kept distinct. The tithes were assigned to the Levites as their living, and these Levites were religious and not civil officers. They were not numbered among the soldiers, they had no inheritance or landed property, they performed no offices of a civil or secular government. They were set apart for religious duties. All the duties mentioned as proper for them were of a religious

kind. They were to bear the ark, attend upon the tabernacle, minister to the Lord and bless the people. On the other hand there were civil officers distinct from these, such as judges and kings. They exacted taxes of their own. The great quarrel which the ten tribes under Jeroboam had with Rehoboam was because of the taxes. They demanded that Rehoboam should reduce the taxes his father Solomon had imposed and he would not do so, but increased them. We do not read of their appropriating the tithes nor sharing their taxes with the Levites. Uzziah, the king, was stricken with leprosy, which clung to him throughout life, for disregarding this distinction between the civil and religious officers in the matter of offering sacrifices. The tithe then was a religious tax, and he does not tithe in the Bible sense who divides his tenth between the taxes and religious officers.

3 It has sometimes been supposed that when the Israelites paid a tenth it was devoted to both charities and public worship. There were three kinds of offerings in Israel— tithes, alms and free-will offerings. The first of these was compulsory and the last two voluntary as to quantity. "The tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. The tithe is the Lord's." It did not in any sense belong to the man on whose place it was made. It was not his to make charitable offerings out of. Suppose you own a farm and you put a tenant on it, agreeing to give him one-half of the yield for the other When you go to make a settlement with him at the end of the year, you find that he has a large share and has assigned you a very small one. When you inquire the reason, he tells you that he has been helping the poor in the neighborhood out of your half, and that is the explanation of its being so reduced. I think you would give him to understand that hereafter if he wished to be charitable he must show that charity out of his half of the property, and if you wish any of your half to be spent in that way you would prefer to distribute it yourself. The case is exactly analogous except that God said to the Israelite, "I will allow you nine-tenths and you must reserve me one-tenth." If the Israelite wanted to be charitable and give alms he must do it out of his nine-tenths and leave the Lord's tenth alone. That was God's in such a special sense that if a man took it, it would be stealing. That is the very language God's word applies to it. "Ye have robbed me," God said to Israel. They replied: "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" He answered: "In tithes and offerings." Whatever else of the tithe law may or

may not have survived, this much at least has. Whatever is contributed for religious uses is contributed to the worship of God and not as a charity. The minister, for instance, is not an object of charity. He may in the providence of God become an object of charity. He may become disabled through disease or injury, and may not have any friends to whom he can properly look for assistance and he may have to go to the almshouse. When that time comes it is his duty to go, and not go rebelliously, but go rejoicingly as to the new sphere in which God permits him to labor and suffer for his glory. But so long as he retains the use of brain and muscle sufficiently to earn his own living, he ought to scorn a charity as an affront to his manhood and an impeachment of his integrity. What the Christian people contribute to the support of religion is the tribute they pay to God, and when they have paid it to him he gives it to the minister, as he formerly gave the Lord's tenth to the Levite.

VII. There are those who claim that the tithe is still binding, and they present a strong argument in support of this claim.

1. It is claimed that the tithe law was not repealed along with the other regulations belonging to the Mosaic dispensation, because it did not belong specially to that dispensation, but it existed before it. Like the Sabbath law, it was in operation before the Mosaic law, and therefore, like the Sabbath law, it is intended to continue after the Mosaic law is repealed. (I once asked a gentleman who held these views, why it was that the tithe law was not put in the Ten Commandments just as the Sabbath law was, if it was intended to be so much like that law. He answered: "It is in the Ten Commandments. It is represented in the eighth commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' for the tithe is the Lord's and it is just as truly stealing to take what belongs to God as to take what belongs to man." I throw out that suggestion for what you may think it is worth.) Now if we ask these advocates of the tithe law what is their ground for saying that there was any tithe law before the time of Moses, they cite the case of Abraham's paying tithes to Melchisedec. The tenth which Abraham paid Melchisedec was not a voluntary offering. As the Greek word in the seventh chapter of Hebrews shows, Melchisedec "tithed" or exacted tithes of Abraham, showing that there was a law or a divine command working in that case. Another instance of the operation of the tithe law before the time

of Moses was that of Jacob's paying a tithe. Was it merely by accident that Jacob decided to offer to the Lord exactly the same portion which God had demanded of Abraham and which was afterwards fixed in the law of Moses? In further proof of the statement that the tithe law did not belong specially to the Mosaic law and therefore was not repealed with that law, they refer us to the fact that the practice of tithing was not confined to the Israelites. A great many nations practiced it. Some claim that the practice has been universal. I have never been able to verify that claim. It is not necessary to prove that it is universal, for it is remarkable if it proves to be general. The question arises, "How did so many nations get the idea that a tenth was the proportion of the income which they ought to give to religious purposes?" When the question is asked, "How did the nations get the idea of animal sacrifices?," we answer that they received it by tradition from Adam. Adam was taught to shed the blood of animals in expiation of sin and as a type of the sacrifice of Christ, and the custom was handed down from father to son till it prevailed in nearly all nations. If this is a satisfactory account of the prevalence of animal sacrifices, why is it not an equally satisfactory explanation of the prevalence of tithing, thus tracing the custom back to a probable origin in Eden?

Another argument by which they seek to prove that the tithe law is still binding upon us is that there is no sentence in the New Testament expressly repealing that law, and if it is repealed no other plan for raising money has been substituted for it. It has sometimes been supposed that the law was formally set aside and a new one put in its place by the command in I Cor., xvi, 2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." It is very hard to see how this language can be regarded as opposed to tithing. Even if the apostle were here discussing the raising of money for church purposes, the language applies to tithing. If you make a thousand dollars and give one hundred to the church, and I make five hundred and give fifty, we are giving as "God hath prospered us." But the truth is the apostle is not discussing the raising of money for the church at all, but for a merely charitable purpose, as will be seen by examining the first and the third verses of the chapter. If then the law is not expressly repealed and no other has been put in its place, what right have we to say that it is not in force today?

3. Another argument that is used to prove that tithing was intended to continue as God's plan for raising the revenues of the church is the language of the apostle in I Cor., ix, 13-14: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."

Now I will not claim that such arguments prove that the tithe is still binding. I promised at the beginning of the discussion that I would not lay down a single main proposition, but such as I felt sure I could secure your absolute concurrence in. I can see how this reasoning, strong as it is, may fail to convince you, so that I content myself with a statement of the position without claiming that it has been established. But if I am not prepared to take that position, I am prepared to take a safer and a stronger one, and now I proceed to announce my eighth proposition from which I do not see that there can be any escape.

VIII. Christians should not be satisfied to give less than a tenth.

1. If the advocates of a tithe law have not proved that such a law is obligatory, they have presented an argument so strong that no one can, in the face of it, assert that the tithe law has been repealed. Such is the state of the case that no one can affirm with confidence that he knows it has been repealed. And if there is any *uncertainty* about it, we *dare not withhold the tenth* lest we rob God. The bare doubt as to whether God laid a special claim to that tenth or permitted me to use it, would make me afraid to touch it, just as I would have been afraid to touch the ark of the covenant after Uzzah had been stricken dead for laying his hand upon it.

2. Again, either the law has been repealed or it has not. If it has not, then we are bound to give the tenth. If it has been repealed, why has it been? Doubtless in accordance with the analogy of all repeals, it has been removed to make way for something larger. The Passover has been taken away to make room for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Bloody sacrifices have been abolished because the great antitypical bloody sacrifice has come. The temple has been removed that Jehovah might fill the earth with his presence, that those who wish to worship him might worship him in spirit and in truth. So if the law of the tenth has been withdrawn, it is doubtless to prepare for *larger* and not smaller offerings.

Everything else has expanded in the Christian dispensation. The sphere of worship is enlarged. Formerly it was confined within the narrow limits of Palestine, but now national boundaries have been broken, and it is to go into all the earth. The motive is increased. If a tenth was a fitting tribute of worship to the Jew, who knew the Christ only through the obscurities of symbol and of prophecy, what should be the measure of our gratitude when we know the dying love and tender sympathies of Jesus and the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit?

3 The appeal becomes even stronger yet when we contrast ourselves with the heathen. The Egyptians paid tithes to the worship of an ox, the Greeks and Romans paid tithes to the worship of their unclean deities, the Mormons pay tithes to support their infamous religion, and when we think of all the glories that invest our religion, and with which it will invest us, can we yield precedence to these heathen religions? Blood-bought servants of Jesus, shall we not remove this dishonor from us that, when all restrictions are removed, and we are left to choose what amount we shall give as an expression of our love and a symbol of our liberty, we give less than the heathen do?

At three different times I have made a special study of this subject, and each time the study has been as exhaustive as I could make it. Each time I have accompanied the study with a special prayer that I might be guided to see the truth, to know whether this law has been repealed or not. I have asked for views upon that question so clear that I might not only know how to act myself, but, as a public teacher, I might be able to point out the path of duty to God's people and say to them confidently, "This is certainly the truth." God has not seen fit to answer the prayer in that way, but he has answered it in a better way. He has not shown me certainly whether the law is binding or is not, but instead of giving me a strong probable argument on one side or the other, he has enabled me to plead for the practice of tithing by an argument that is to my mind irrefragable. The reasoning seems to me so compact that I do not see a crevice in which the point of a needle may be inserted.

It is proper at this point to allude briefly to some of the common practical objections to tithing. I might say in general that all the objections brought against the practice of tithing in this day, could have been brought against it with the same force in ancient Israel.

1 There are some who say: "I am too poor to pay a tenth of my income." But they are not really poorer than many who had to pay tithes in Israel. They are not poorer than the laborers who "earned a penny a day," when Christ was on earth.

2 Others object that they do not know what their income is and so cannot give a tenth of it. I admit that there is some practical difficulty here, and there are different kinds of difficulties in different kinds of business. No general rule can be prescribed. Each man will have to settle this question for himself and by the help of such information as his account-books give. But it is possible in every case, by a close study of the situation, to reach a safe working estimate. The Jews, no doubt, had the same sorts of difficulties in making an estimate that we have. From the circle of my own acquaintance I recall ministers, lawyers, physicians, merchants and farmers who have practiced it. It has been suggested that if the case were reversed and God had offered to add a tenth to our income instead of subtracting a tenth from it we would very readily make some sort of satisfactory estimate.

3 It is sometimes objected that tithing is wrong in principle, since it creates the impression that only a tenth belongs to God, whereas all that we have is His and all must be used for His glory. In reply to this objection, I would ask if it is not true that God owned everything that the Israelites owned too? And yet God said, "The tithe is the Lord's." That tenth was the Lord's in a sense in which he did not lay claim to the remainder. That tenth was simply a tribute, it was a token of the fact that God had a title to the whole. We call the Sabbath "The Lord's Day," but we do not mean thereby that only one day in the week is the Lord's. That day is specially consecrated to him in token of the fact that he owns all our time. Now the question for us as Christians is, when we go to consecrate a part of our substance to the Lord as an acknowledgment that He has a right to it all, what is a proper proportion? Should we give more or less than the Israelite did?

IX. Tithing brings a blessing both spiritual and material.

I need hardly discuss the spiritual benefit that would accrue, as that is almost self-evident. Every act of consecration whether of ourselves or of our substance is attended with spiritual blessing. The remarkable thing about tithing is that one does not lose, but rather gains by it *financially*. If it had been desirable to do so,

I could have occupied the whole hour I have been speaking with the recital of the cases of persons who have been blessed with success in business as the result of their paying tithes. The first case I met with in my own experience was that of a gentleman, 75 years of age, who was quite a wealthy man. He told me that after he began to pay tithes his contributions were seven or eight times as much as they had ever been and he felt the loss of what he gave less than he had ever done. A few years ago, when this subject was discussed throughout our church, a minister wrote a number of postal cards to eminent ministers in the church asking their opinion of the practice of tithing. He was particularly anxious to see the answer of a venerable minister, who was reputed to have made a great deal of money during his life. This was the substance of the answer he received: "For several years after I entered the ministry I had a hard time. I received a small salary and found it very hard to make it support my family. At last I began to pay a tenth of my salary to the worship of God. I then began to feel a relief from the strain of poverty and even to accumulate a little. As this relief and success came, I increased my contributions beyond the tenth, and the more I gave the more I made until now I am considered rich.. So that my experience has led me to object to the practice of paying one-tenth to the Lord. I think that is too little." I know a young lawyer in the Southwest whose friends once asked him how it happened that he always gave so readily and so generously to every religious object that was presented to him. They could not understand it because he did not seem to have any better clients nor any more of them than the other lawyers in the town. He said: "Whenever I get any money I always put a tenth of it into a box by itself. So when I am asked to make a contribution there is always a plenty of money to do it with, and it does not hurt me to give it because the money is already consecrated to the Lord, and I could not use it for any other purpose anyhow." A gentleman has sent out a circular to thousands of people in this country advocating the custom of tithing and challenging the production of a single case in which a man had proven a failure in business who gave a tenth of his income to the worship of God. Though that challenge has been standing now for years and the circular is all the while actively sent out in every direction, not one such case has ever been reported to the author. Sometimes it has been reported that the success of such persons is not uni-

form and unbroken. Sometimes they meet with business reverses, such as will come to the most prosperous men, but in all cases they recover from their embarrassments and start again at once on the upward grade. If the rule even had many exceptions it would be wonderful, how much more wonderful when it has no exception.

It would be wrong in me not to give you the benefit of my own experience. If I should give you that experience it would not be a violation of the Saviour's command, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." That commandment refers to alms and not to what is paid to the worship of God, which was a public act. Every word I bring you this morning, I bring from the hotly contested battle-ground of a personal experience. I come to tell you of a victory, but a victory achieved through absolute surrender, and of relief from financial straits brought about by giving to the Lord the honor due to him.

Some will doubtless say that this is an appeal to a wrong motive. But ought we to characterize it in this way when God distinctly appeals to this motive in his Word? He makes that very appeal in the verse which I have chosen for a text for this sermon. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine," Prov., iii, 9. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," Prov., xi, 24. "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom," Luke, vi, 38. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it, Malachi, iii, 10.

Now I have concluded what I proposed to say on this important subject. I have presented the subject in a series of nine propositions as follows:

I In order that the church may do the work which the Lord has given it to do, it must have money.

II In order that the church may do the work which the Lord has given it to do, it must have a great deal of money.

III The church of to-day has money enough to do the work, if it were only consecrated to that end.

IV The church has not properly consecrated its money to this work.

V A desirable plan for bringing the church up to a proper standard of consecration will embody the following features :

1. It will result in a sufficient supply of money to do the work.

2. It will distribute the burdens of church support equitably among the members.

3 It will work with the smallest possible degree of friction.

4. It will relieve the deacons of the unscriptural task of collecting.

5. It will establish a community of interests between a pastor and his congregation and draw them into a fuller sympathy with each other.

6. It will promote the spirituality of the church.

VI At one time in the history of the world a system of religious finances was in operation which embodied these features. It was instituted by divine command, and it is the only system that we are sure God ever appointed. I refer, of course, to the tith law of the Israelites.

VII There are those who claim that the tithe law is still binding, and they present a strong argument in support of this claim.

VIII Whether this argument is conclusive or not, Christians should not be satisfied to give less than a tenth.

IX Tithing brings a blessing both spiritual and material.

I prefaced these propositions with the statement that I would not announce one leading proposition to which I did not feel sure of securing your assent. I thought it would serve to arouse your attention, if I would tell you what great confidence I had in these positions and in the prospect of securing your concurrence in them. Now have I fulfilled the opening promise and are we fully agreed as to the truth of these propositions? If you believe the positions are not tenable, I do not ask you to adopt them. If you are in doubt as to the correctness of them, the subject is one of too much importance to every interest you hold dear for you to rest in that uncertainty. You owe it to your temporal welfare, you owe it to your spiritual and eternal interests, you owe it to your family for their instruction in divine things, and you owe it to the church you have promised to serve, to remove the doubt by continuing to investigate the subject till

you reach a satisfactory view of it. But suppose you do not occupy either of these attitudes toward the subject. Suppose that instead of having any doubt on the question and instead of being convinced that I am mistaken in my views, you are fully persuaded of the truth of every one of these nine propositions, permit me to press the question, "What will you do about it?" Will the opinions so formed have any effect on the life, and if so, what will that effect be? From an experience of several years I might forecast some of the possible results. I have presented these views before a congregation, where some in it who had been my very warm personal friends, became highly incensed and left the church in a towering passion, manifesting their anger in about the same way that children would do under the circumstances. While that is about the silliest way to treat the matter, it is not always the most barren of results. Sometimes a little warmth of resentment like that ends in a complete surrender and an enthusiastic discharge of the duty that had caused the feeling. So in that case, while these friends never renewed their friendship for me with the same ardor, I have observed with great delight their increased devotion to the church and their more liberal support of all its enterprises. I can always be resigned to the sacrifice of a personal friendship for such results as these. On one occasion, when I had preached about these things, one member of the church approached another and asked, "What are we going to do about that?" He replied, "That was a good sermon." "Ah! but," said his friend, "What are we going to do about it?" He answered again, "That was a good sermon." Now there are few things that are as delicious to a minister as the praises of the people of God when they are accompanied with evidence of their increasing love for the Master, but a minister should not want any praises which he cannot lay as a tribute at the Master's feet. When the applause is not accompanied by a renewed consecration of the hearer, it is a dangerous indication and one which every faithful minister must deplore. No sermon is "a good sermon" except in the light of its results.

Again, there are those who plainly say that they are convinced that it is their duty to pay tithes, but who flatly refuse to do it. One Monday morning, succeeding a Sabbath on which I had preached on this subject, I met a gentleman on the street who had been in the congregation. He was such a gentleman, in every best sense of the word! One could not but be attracted

by his pleasant bearing and his genuine character. He came out of his way to speak to me and to refer to the sermon. He concluded by saying, "I regard the argument as absolutely unanswerable, and all that I can say is that we do not always do what we know to be our duty." He shook my hand, bowed politely and passed on. I thought he sighed. His face certainly wore an expression of sadness. Well he might be sad! There are not many things fraught with so much spiritual disaster as the deliberate refusal to do a known duty. Once when I had preached on this subject to a congregation, I concluded by making an estimate of the funds that they could control if they would adopt these suggestions. I showed how it would extricate the church from its embarrassment, and what they could accomplish for the Master besides. My estimate was a safe one and I challenged them to show that it was not. Some of the best business men in the congregation met casually that week and they concluded to review my figures and they unanimously agreed that my estimate was far too small. When I heard it, my heart leaped with expectation, and I eagerly asked my informant what they were going to do about it. He answered with a shrug of his shoulders, "Nothing." I will tell you what the subsequent history of that church has been, and leave you to judge of its connection with that incident. From that day to this, the financial strength of that church has steadily wasted away. Some of their best men have died, many have moved away and some who were left and most willing to help it, have lost their property. Now it is with the greatest difficulty that they can supply themselves with preaching twice a month.

When, therefore, I stand up today once more to proclaim the truth as I see it, I realize that it is a critical time in the spiritual history of many of you. I feel sure that many agree with me fully, and they are then brought face to face with what is to them a clear command of the Master, and if they deliberately refuse to obey that command, a baneful blight may settle upon their lives, such as falls upon the sinner who is almost persuaded to accept Christ but will not yield and who lapses into a deadly indifference. When the children of Israel stood on the very border of the promised land and would not obey God's command to enter in and possess it, they were doomed to their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Every duty is a privilege, and when God causes us to stand up before a duty by clearly revealing it to

us, it is like standing on the verge of a new Canaan of spiritual happiness and power and glory, and only woe and wandering can result from a refusal to enter in. God help you in this critical hour and save you from such a mistake May He kindly lead you to surrender at discretion and, gladly bowing at his feet, to say, "Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, Oh! my God."

I am done. I am grateful for the patient attention you have given me through two sermons of unusual length. I bring this offering and lay it at the Master's feet and pray that he may make it a blessing to you. "Bring all your tithes into the store-house and try me now herewith." See if I will not make you grow in grace and knowledge. See if I will not convert your sons and daughters. See "if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

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